

**City of Belmont  
PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING JANUARY 5, 2011  
MINUTES**

The regular meeting of the Belmont Parks & Recreation Commission of January 5, 2011 was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

**I. ROLL CALL**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Andrews (CC), Vice Chair Cheechov, Commissioner (C) Wright, Youth Commissioner (YC) Bartee, C King, Bortoli, Davis, Sullivan and YC Reimche.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Parks and Recreation Director (PRD) Gervais, City Manager Scoles, Police Captain (PC) DeSmidt and Secretary (S) Saggau

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

November 3, 2010

*C King moved, seconded by C Bortoli, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of November 3, 2010.* Vote 8 in favor. Commissioner Davis abstained.

December 1, 2010

Commissioner Wright requested on page 4 the minutes note that there was Commission consensus on her suggestion to keep the raccoon tracks on the pathway in Semeria Park.

*C Sullivan moved, seconded by C Bortoli, to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of December 1, 2010 with this correction.* Vote 8 in favor. Commissioner Cheechov abstained.

**III. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION/COMMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**

C Wright reported the Green Advisory Committee will prioritize their recommendations at their next meeting. Two issues to be considered are a ban of single use bags and a Water Conservation Ordinance.

C Sullivan said although there is no longer a Tree Lighting Ceremony he enjoyed having the holiday tree lit up in Twin Pines Park. He noted YC Reimche was in the Christmas Carol performance at Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU).

C Sullivan stated he is concerned with the direction the City Council is going with the NDNU field use and changes made to the Conditional Use Permit. He would encourage the Council to spend more time on this issue to get closer to the Planning Commission recommendation.

C King concurred with C Sullivan.

C King wished everyone a Happy New Year.

PRD Gervais introduced City Manager Greg Scoles to the Commission.

PRD Gervais reported the large bridge sections to go over the slough would be installed at the Sports Complex on Thursday, January 13, 2011.

PRD Gervais said he has met with the Belmont Rotary Club to discuss potential improvements to Barrett Playground.

C Sullivan reported on the progress of the Davey Glen Ad Hoc Committee.

#### **IV. AGENDA AMENDMENTS**

None

#### **V. OLD BUSINESS**

##### **a. Off-Leash Dog Use Proposal at the Barrett Community Center**

PRD Gervais reported the current municipal ordinance requires that dogs be on leashes no longer than six feet in Belmont but people have used the fields at Barrett for off-leash dog running for some time. In September, 2010 Mayor Wozniak requested that this item be placed on the City Council Agenda as an Item 9 and after Council discussion it was referred to the Parks & Recreation Commission for consideration.

The City Council received a proposal from dog owners requesting a change in the ordinance to allow specific times for off-leash dogs on the field at Barrett Community Center. PRD Gervais noted the importance of this social opportunity for the community of dog owners. He explained it would be a recreational opportunity for Belmont residents. The City of San Mateo recently went through a process of allowing off-leash dog use on athletic fields.

PRD Gervais stated there have also been some concerns expressed about how dogs would impact youth sports and the athletic fields. Issues noted included damage to the turf, potential for safety conflicts, and dog waste and cleanup. Neighbors have expressed concern about traffic and staff is concerned about the time required to manage this project.

PRD Gervais stated if the Commission chooses to set up an Ad-Hoc Committee it would look at alternatives including allocating specific hours or allowing use under the Athletic Field Use Policy. The Commission could also decide to hold off and review this issue with the Master Plan Update. There is always an option to not take any action.

Due to the amount of staff time required to address this issue it is an additional item for the Priority Calendar. PRD Gervais requested the Commission consider adding this as a priority calendar item and to consider creating an Ad-Hoc Committee.

In response to C Wright's question PRD Gervais explained this item has come up now because there has been more enforcement of the ordinance due to calls received. Subsequently, the dog owner community organized and put together a proposal and brought it to the City Council.

C Sullivan questioned how the Barrett field is used by youth sports. PRD Gervais stated it is mostly soccer use but there is also use by youth softball.

In response to C Sullivan's question, Police Captain (PC) DeSmidt said the Police Department received 15 calls for enforcement in 2010; nine from neighbors and six were proactive enforcement by police officers. PC DeSmidt explained the Police Department provided education enforcement by handing out pamphlets and adding signage. He noted there were a couple citations issued after a long education period.

C Davis asked what the fees are for this infraction and was told the first offense generally runs \$100.

Responding to C King's question PC DeSmidt said neighborhood complaints were due to the violation of the ordinance and did not appear to be due to noise or dogs in their yards.

C Andrews asked if people or children were hurt by the dogs. PC DeSmidt said police do not have records of attacks or injuries at Barrett but one child was knocked over by a dog. He added most incidents occur between two dogs.

In response to C Sullivan's questions it was noted there are dog waste dispensers at Barrett Community Center as well as in Twin Pines and other parks.

C Andrews questioned why training classes are not included in the proposal from dog owners. PRD Gervais stated that classes are not likely a money making proposal for user groups.

Frank Magniani, representative of Belmont/Redwood Shores Softball, noted that a number of softball teams use the field at Barrett; a total of 21 teams play and practice there. He said their regular season runs from February through May and their all-star season is May to August. He expressed concern with field time being taken from girls' softball. He said he visited the Cipriani Dog Park and Barrett field recently and saw few dogs. In response to a question, Mr. Magniani said that the youths use Barrett field from 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Joe Phipps, Vice-President of the Belmont/Redwood Shores Youth Softball Organization, explained that Barrett is used for the younger children because it has the smallest field. He noted that he is a dog owner, a Belmont resident, and uses Cipriani Dog Park. He noted Cipriani has lights for evening use and Barrett does not.

Rick Frautschi expressed concerns with sanitation, field maintenance, and dog urine causing damage to grass. He also noted that Barrett is not fully fenced off and does not provide separate areas for large and small dogs. He expressed concern with the costs of installing fencing and signage and staff costs for enforcement to assure safety in the park. He said a letter from the Peninsula Humane Society states that all counties and cities should have a designated space to exercise their dogs and noted Belmont does have a  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre park for dogs at Cipriani despite the city having a shortage of parks in general. He urged the Commission to keep the existing condition for this field and dropping this item from the City Council Priority Calendar.

Greg Snow, AYSO, said that 26 teams from their organization practice on the Barrett fields and use it from 4:00-6:00 p.m. He added he is a dog owner and he takes his dog to Barrett on a leash and to Cipriani Dog Park for off-leash time. He expressed concern with the logistics of having children running around dogs and the potential for a dog bite. He stated there was a bite incident in AYSO requiring a child to have 60+ stitches and AYSO's insurance will not allow them to have dogs on the field. He expressed concern about dog owners not following the rules. He added AYSO pays a lot to the City to maintain the fields and would not want those funds spent on fence installation.

Dalia Wood stated there is little parking available at Cipriani Dog Park. She walks her dog to Barrett like a number of other dog owners do. She said they do not want to drive the children off the field. She noted dogs on leash still create waste but the groups of dog owners watch out for each other to make sure it is cleaned up. She noticed that some grass on the field was killed when lines were installed for sports. She added some children at Barrett do not have dogs of their own and have enjoyed playing with the dogs.

Terri Lou said she has been going to Barrett with her dog for a couple years and has made good friends there. She noted she has not been going Barrett lately to be respectful and wait and see if this proposal can be approved. She said there is a lot of self monitoring within the group but the people that do not follow the rules would be there anyway. If there is a group they would monitor all the dogs and people to make sure rules are followed.

Kal Deutsch explained the reason the proposal did not allow for classes on the field was for traffic and crowd management. He said they researched what the best practices are in other cities. He would like to present ideas to an Ad-Hoc Committee. They would not want to take anything away from children that use the field now. He noted the damage done to the field was done by someone using white spray paint instead of chalk.

George Mastalir stated he agrees with the concerns expressed and that there are not enough fields in Belmont. He noted people have been bringing dogs onto Barrett Field for years and there have not been any problems. He requested that there be a trial program to see how it works out and they are not asking for additional fencing or lighting. They are not asking for hours that would overlap with sports groups. He said the dog owners could be flexible and believes a solution would be possible if an Ad-Hoc Committee is formed.

C Wright spoke in support of having an Ad-Hoc Committee. She said her biggest question is the sanitation issue and if other cities have studied it. She would like the Ad-Hoc Committee to explore and address this.

C King expressed the following concerns:

- Would it set a precedent?
- Field maintenance
- Would dynamics change?
- If it becomes legal would signage and fencing be needed for enforcement?

C Cheechov questioned if the dog owners considered that if off-leash dogs are permitted at Barrett Park it would be open to other dog owners outside the neighborhood. C Cheechov noted the Commission does not make a decision but would make a recommendation to the City Council.

C Bortoli expressed concerns with the safety of children around the unfenced dogs and damage to the turf. He noted the dog owners requesting this proposal would probably be very responsible but less responsible dog owners may cause problems. He said there would be little time available after the sports groups use the field. He added the city does have a dog park and is in the process of being refurbished.

C Davis acknowledged the dog community is underserved but had concerns with Barrett field because it is not compatible to have dogs off leash with sports groups. There would be little time available in the evening. He would not have a problem with dogs using the fields in the mornings. He spoke in a favor of a six month test allowing morning use.

YC Reimche noted the youth sports groups are paying for field maintenance and should get priority of use.

C Sullivan said he has mixed opinions on this issue. He acknowledged the request from the dog owners is well meaning and they have valid request for a place for dogs to play. He agreed with concerns on how to separate things and the amount of staff time required for this issue. He noted the Commission and staff are currently focusing on many significant projects. He suggested the Commission table a decision on an Ad-Hoc Committee and considers this item on the priority calendar with all the other projects. He agreed with C Davis that morning time may work out but did not think it would be practical after daylight hours. He added the dog owners may want to consider approaching Notre Dame de Namur University to see if they would allow them to use the grass field area adjacent to Ralston Avenue.

CC Andrews agreed with starting an Ad-Hoc Committee and that this item should also be considered on the priority calendar. He expressed concerns about the time requested, if cleanup would be maintained, and taking any field time away from the youth sports.

C Davis questioned if an Ad-Hoc Committee should be formed because the request is fairly well defined and a Committee takes considerable staff time. C King agreed and added an Ad-Hoc Committee is premature and the Commission should see where it is on the Priority Calendar.

C Wright said the suggested rules came from the dog owners and thought there would be a benefit to having all groups represented to work out solutions.

*C Wright moved that the Commission recommend that an Ad-Hoc Committee be established to further study this issue and come back with a refined recommendation. CC Andrews added that it also be put on the priority calendar to see where it stands to the Commission. There was no second for the motion.*

Following discussion the Commission decided not to put together an Ad-Hoc Committee until after determining its ranking on the Priority Council.

*C Davis moved, seconded by C Sullivan, that the Commission recommends to Council that proactive enforcement of the leash law be suspended between the hours of dawn and 8:00 a.m. in the morning at Barrett Park seven days a week. Vote 4 in favor (Davis, Sullivan, Bartee and Reimche); 5 opposed (Andrews, Wright, Bortoli, King and Cheechov).*

Discussion ensued on the ordinance and enforcement.

*C Sullivan moved, seconded by C Wright, that the Commission close the discussion on the topic for this evening with the intent of prioritizing it on the next agenda item and if it makes it onto the Park & Recreation Priority Calendar then it be put back on the Commission agenda as soon as reasonable to discuss further action including an Ad-Hoc Committee. Vote 9-0 in favor.*

**b. Priority Calendar**

PRD Gervais explained the purpose of the Priority Calendar is to prioritize projects that require significant staff time but are not part of day to day operations. He reviewed progress on the projects listed on the Priority Calendar. He noted there are five new proposed projects that could be added to the calendar and Commissioners could also suggest other projects to consider.

PRD Gervais requested the Commissioners rank the projects 1-5 with five being the highest priority and one would be the lowest. The Commission was given a list to rank. It was noted that Semeria Park should be removed from the list because it is currently being constructed.

PRD Gervais answered Commission questions. He explained the City did not receive Grant funding for the Athletic Field Improvements and Davey Glen Park projects but there is sufficient funding in the Planned Park Account for the Davey Glen Park Project. There are no funds for construction of the synthetic turf project but the staff will continue to look for other funding sources and will propose to bring back to Council for funding to start design. Following Commission discussion it was decided to separate the design funding for the Athletic Field Improvements from the construction costs.

In response to C Wright's question PRD Gervais said the list was reduced last year to be more realistic. He explained the question now is what projects the Commission wants to consider for the future.

PRD Gervais said the Facilities Condition Management Assessment was placed on the Calendar at the request of Council so that staff reviews the condition of facilities and identifies needed maintenance.

C Davis suggested that there be a separate Master Plan for Barrett Community Center. PRD Gervais explained when the Park & Open Space Master Plan is completed there would be a lot of discussion on Barrett but if the Commission wants to separate it that could be done. Following Commission discussion it was decided to rank Barrett Community Center Planning as a separate project.

C Davis noted that the Open Space Plan needs to be considered sooner due to the recent acquisition of the open space lands. C Sullivan suggested adding an item that concentrates on the newly acquired open space in San Juan Canyon. There was Commission consensus to add this item.

C King requested that addressing the City Holiday Tree be added to the list; to either improve or dissolve it.

Rick Frautschi, Planning Commission Chair (PCC), reported on the Planning Commission's review of their Priority Calendar. He said they are considering 25 items, including five potential new items. These include: (1) Administrative electronic protocol for Planning Commission packets, (2) Storm-water utilization protocol, (3) Financial analysis and property evaluation of businesses along El Camino Real within the proposed High Speed Rail corridor, (4) Large family day care regulations ordinance, and (5) Review of opportunities for city properties for redevelopment potentials.

PCC Frautschi suggested the Commission consider the playground improvements projects for O'Donnell Park and Barrett Community Center be packaged as one project for potential savings. He said the Planning Commission has a solar access ordinance and he would like to recommend that it be combined with the Solar Energy Project at the Belmont Library under a broader Belmont Solar Initiative to be sent to the Green Advisory Committee to study.

PCC Frautschi spoke in support of the priority to improve city hiking trails and would like to see the city owned "paper trails" integrated into the existing trail system. He recommended that the "Tree Planting Program" be transferred to the newly formulated Belmont Tree Board.

PCC Frautschi urged the Commission to consider ranking a non-profit Belmont Parks Foundation out of its stalled status. He said the Planning Commission is considering a recommendation to proceed with revising the City's General Plan and asked the Park & Recreation Commission to consider proceeding with the stalled update of the Parks & Open Space Master Plan including planning for the Barrett Community Center.

Kristen Mercer encouraged the Commission to think and dream big and far into the future when considering the Priority Calendar. She noted the value of properties and the Commission should make sure these assets are utilized in a productive manner. She said the sooner Barrett

Community Center is redeveloped the sooner it could generate revenue for the City which could be used to accomplish other projects. She spoke in support of updating the Parks & Open Space Master Plan and the formation of a Non-Profit Foundation. She endorsed PCC Frautschi's suggestion for the solar initiative. Ms. Mercer would like to see Barrett Community Center become a Center similar to the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park and encouraged the Commission to visit that site.

PRD Gervais proposed having the Commission provide direction on finalizing the list and he would prepare a revised list for the Commission to rank at the next meeting.

CC Andrews suggested incorporating PCC Frautschi's idea of making O'Donnell and Barrett playgrounds into one project. The Commission also supported the idea of the solar initiative and having the Green Advisory Committee complete research.

C King questioned if the Tree Planting Program should be transferred to the Tree Board. PRD Gervais explained the Tree Board is not developed yet and does not have a Priority Calendar. He recommended keeping it on the Park & Recreation Commission Priority Calendar since they are still the Tree Board at this time.

PRD Gervais reviewed the priority calendar list and revisions with the Commission. The list to include:

- Athletic Field Improvements -Synthetic Turf Project Design
- Cipriani Dog Park Improvements
- Davey Glen Park Design and Development
- Facilities Condition Management Assessment
- Davey Glen Park Design and Development
- Non-Profit Belmont Parks Foundation
- Paper Trails
- Solar Access in Belmont (Library)
- Trail Improvements
- Tree Planting Program (Transfer to Tree Board)
- Update on Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan
- Barrett field "Off-leash" Dog project
- Bocce Ball Court in Twin Pines Park
- Replace the Bathroom at Alexander Park
- Playground Improvements O'Donnell Park, Barrett CC
- Barrett Community Center Planning
- San Juan Canyon Open Space Planning
- Address City Holiday Tree

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

None

## **VII. DEPARTMENT REPORTS**



#### **A. Questions and Comments**

PRD Gervais reported after the Tree Ordinance is reviewed by the Planning Commission the Ad-Hoc Committee will consider their comments and then bring the Ordinance back to the Planning and Park & Recreation Commissions.

C Bortoli noted that some Commission terms are ending and Commissioners will need to reapply if they would like to continue to serve. He encouraged the Youth Commissioners to reapply for a second year.

C Wright requested an update on Semeria Park be emailed to the Commission.

#### **B. Future Agenda Items**

PRD Gervais noted he received a request to have the Information Services (IS) Department provide a tutorial at a Commission meeting on the email system but proposed that a workshop be set up in the IS Department where computers would be available to train on. The Commission was in favor of a training session.

PRD Gervais stated there is a Ropes Course behind Ralston School and half of it is built on City land. Ideas for this course will be brought to the Commission in the future.

#### **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

---

Jonathan Gervais  
Parks & Recreation Director